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The Hidden Driver of Frontline Retention: Why Caregiving Support Is the Benefit You're Missing

BY JESSICA SWENSON | MAY 20, 2026



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Sometimes, the hardest parts of your employees' lives are the most invisible, especially for frontline workers. The variety of caregiving demands experienced by workers can have emotional, mental, financial, and physical tolls that aren't visible to their employers, says Griffen Kelly, senior director of partnership development at [Cariloop](#).

By learning about and meeting the caregiving needs of their employees, he says, companies have the opportunity to elevate workplace culture while boosting employee loyalty and trust. "We've seen a shift from caregiving being a social need to being an economic need from an employer perspective," Kelly said during a thought leadership spotlight at [From Day One's May virtual conference](#).

The care economy is in crisis, he says. Forty-eight states are already reporting care shortages, and Americans over 65 are [expected to soon outnumber those under 18](#) for the first time ever, causing demand to continue to grow faster than supply. Added to the already increasing demand for child care, this contributes to rapidly rising costs, long waitlists, and complex systems to navigate. According to Kelly, caregivers often spend an estimated average of 27 to 40 unpaid hours per week coordinating logistics, providers, and schedules.

Still, these challenges can hide within organizations, and Kelly believes there are two key reasons. One is that many people don't identify themselves as a caregiver because they feel they're simply doing what is expected to meet family or social obligations.

The other possible reason is that people consciously avoid disclosing their care demands to avoid potential professional consequences. "There's a certain stigma that can be associated with caregivers," he said. "If I raise my hand and say I'm taking care of somebody, that might get me looked at differently at work. I might get passed up for that promotion because maybe I have too much on my plate and my manager is worried about my workload," he said.

Employee caregiving challenges often show up in the workplace through absenteeism, staffing instability, leave issues, and turnover.

"For the most part, caregiving is reactionary," said Kelly. "Typically, when you're choosing between work and life, life is going to win out." However, trying to balance work and caregiving with no support can lead to employee burnout, distraction, and retention issues.

There is hope, says Kelly, especially if employers offer care support. Citing data provided by Cariloop, he states that over 75% of working parents are more likely to stay with employers offering care benefits, there can be significant reduction in unplanned absences, and many supported caregivers report improved productivity. Providing even modest caregiving support programs shows employees that you understand their struggles and demonstrates that



Griffen Kelly, senior director of partnership development at Cariloop, led the virtual thought leadership spotlight (company photo)

they are supported by leadership. This not only helps them fulfill their responsibilities outside of work but drives workplace productivity.

“Folks who do offer care benefits, however small, recognize that that is creating a culture of care from the top down. You’re showing that progression. You’re showing that buy-in from a leadership perspective,” he said. Cariloop sees a human-centered support model as “absolutely mission critical.” While digital tools are great for self-service, tracking of logistics, and broader needs, there is no replacement for one-on-one human relationships, personalized guidance, and emotional support.

Their program focuses on direct coaching and caregiving advocacy to help families navigate an increasingly complicated caregiving landscape, including locating childcare services, making eldercare decisions, and long-term planning. It also offers backup solutions for immediate or near-term needs like emergency nanny coverage or temporary care support during crises. “Being able to offer flexible backup care is something that we have seen is a resounding need in the market,” said Kelly.

The company’s approach also balances the needs of three key stakeholders—employers, employees, and care providers—by creating a more sustainable care ecosystem that includes flexibility and provider engagement.

So, how can employers begin to implement a caregiving benefit program? Kelly recommends starting with your typical pulse surveys or other employee surveys. Be curious and ask questions to understand the unique and diverse needs of your teams. To evaluate potential ROI, he suggests aligning those metrics with employer priorities like utilization rates, improved return-to-work outcomes, reduced absenteeism, and better productivity.

Kelly acknowledges that this type of support can be overlooked during benefits planning discussions, but encourages leaders that already offer the benefit to review utilization data, measure effectiveness, and seek opportunities to improve the value and engagement in your program.

“There’s a lot of opportunity to drive a more valuable and sought-after benefit. Take a look under the hood, if you’re offering one of those benefits today, and see where maybe you can make some adjustments, where you can drive a more valuable benefit for your workforce.” He also emphasized the importance of meeting employees where they are and communicating effectively so they know what is available to them. By visibly and clearly demonstrating your investment in their support, you can strengthen employee confidence and dedication.

“Our goal is always to make sure that we’re meeting employees in whatever way, shape or form is most conducive to them and their familial situation,” he said. “If you show that you’re invested in your employees and their caregiving needs, they will feel loyal and they will feel trusting in you as an employer.”

Editor’s note: From Day One thanks our partner, [Cariloop](#), for sponsoring this thought leadership spotlight.

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